

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 NIC-01

DRC-01 /111 W

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R 190500Z AUG 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2312

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS IN PUBLIC RUPTURE

1. SUMMARY: STATEMENTS BY MIN. LABOR AND BY QUEENSLAND UNION LEADER HAVE PUSHED LABOR'S INTERNAL SQUABBLE INTO PUBLIC ARENA.

2. JACK EGERTON, SENIOR FEDERAL VICE PRESIDENT OF RULING AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (ALP), WHO IS ALSO SECRETARY OF QUEENSLAND TRADES AND LABOR

COUNCIL (ACTU) ON AUG 15 LASHED OUT AT SOME TRADE UNION LEADERS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS FOR "LACK OF SYMPATHY FOR GENERAL PUBLIC" AND OF CREATING "ANARCHY" IN SOME INDUSTRIAL SITUATIONS.

3. IN A CIRCULAR PREPARED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO FORTY-THREE QUEENSLAND UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH HIS COUNCIL, EGERTON CALLED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF ROYAL COMMISSION TO EXAMINE QUESTIONS RELATING TO WAGE INDESATON, PRICE CONTROL AND REGULAR REVIEW OF TARIFFS.

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IN OVBIOS REFERENCE TO RECENT STATEMENTS BY COMMUNISTS WITHIN

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, EGERTON CASTIGATED THOSE WHO IGNORE ESTABLISHED SYSTEMS OF CONSULTATION WITHIN MOVEMENT, AND WHO CREATED INDUSTRIAL UNREST FROM OTHER THAN INDUSTRIAL MOTIVES.

4. PREDICTABLY, EGERTON'S STARTLING STATEMENTS BROUGHT WIDESPREAD REACTION: RANGING FROM SURPRISED APPROVAL BY SHADOW MIN. LABOR MALCOLM FRASER; THROUGH CAUTIOUS RESPONSE OF ACTU PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE, WHO IS RESERVING COMMENT FOR INNER CIRCLES OF ALP AND ACTU; TO OUTRIGHT REJECTION BY COMMUNIST LEADERS, PLUS SOME OBVIOUSLY RELUCTANT NEGATIVES FROM NON-COMMUNIST BUT LEFT LEADERS, LIKE CLIFF DOAN OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS.

5. OBSERVERS, WHO HAD SPECULATED THAT EGERTON HAD BEEN INSPIRED TO SPEAK OUT BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM WITH WHOM QUEENSLAND LEADER IS IDENTIFIED, WERE CONFIRMED IN SPECULATION AUG 16, WHEN MIN. LABOR CLYDE CAMERON ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSED HIS POSITION.

6. IN BRISBANE TO ADDRESS MEETING OF UNION EXECUTIVES CAMERON ADDED FILLIPS OF HIS OWN WHEN HE ACCUSED SOME UNIONS OF "BLOODY MINDEDNESS AND NEAR ANARCHY" SAYING, "UNION RANK AND FILE ARE SICK AND TIRED OF BEING OBLIGED TO STRIKE AT DROP OF HAT". LABOR LEADERS WERE PLAYING DANGEROUS GAME, CAMERON BELIEVES, WHEN THEY HURT GENERAL PUBLIC, WHICH IS NOT SOME "DANGEROUS ENEMY" BUT INDEED INCLUDES

VERY SAME WORKERS UNIONS WERE COMMITTED TO PROTECT.

7. COMMENT: CAMERON STATEMENT IS STRONGEST YET GOVERNMENT ATTACK ON ITS OWN TRADE UNION BASE. LABATT THINKS EGERTON LETTER WAS WELL PLANNED PRELUDE FOR CAMERON BLAST, AS HE COULD NOT HAVE GONE SO FAR WITHOUT EXCUSE FROM TRADE UNION SECTOR. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ONLY UNION ACTUALLY NAMED BY MIN. LABOR WAS FAR RIGHT CLERKS' UNION WHICH IS ONE OF FEW AFFILIATED WITH DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY. HOWEVER, CLERKS HAVE TRAVELLED IN SOME UNUSUAL COMPANY EVER SINCE ACTU 1973 CONFERENCE WHEN CLERKS JOINED ULTRA LEFT TO DEFEAT CENTER MOVES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM. ALSO, CAMERON SHOTGUN WAS AIMED NOT AT CLERKS ALONE AND HE HIT SENSITIVE AREAS AS WITNESS QUICK REACTION FROM JOHN HALFPENNY, ADMITTED COMMUNIST LEADER OF VICTORIA STATE METAL WORKERS WHO PUBLICLY "DOUBTED EITHER EGERTON OR CAMERON REFLECTED WORKERS' ATTITUDES". OBSERVERS HERE NOW LOOK FOR INCREASING RIFT BETWEEN ALP AND TRADE UNIONS; AND SOME REGARD WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONCERN GROWING TENSIONS WITHIN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT ITSELF. OLD LINE LABORITE ALAN REID, NOW RESPECTED SENIOR COLUMNIST AND TV COMMENTATOR, ON AUG 18 LIKENED CURRENT SITUATION TO 1949, WHEN POST WAR TRANSITION WAS MARKED BY HIGH PRICES, LAGGING WAGES AND BITTER STRUGGLE BETWEEN COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST TRADE UNIONISTS. LABATT POINTS OUT THIS LAST FACTOR WAS PRINCIPLE CAUSE OF FALL OF LABORITE CHIFLEY'S GOVERNMENT IN DEC 1949, USHERING IN LIBERAL PARTY SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS UNTIL 1972. FURTHER LABATT THINKS SHIFTING POLITICAL

COLORS IN WORKER SPECTRUM FAR FROM FALLING IN ESTABLISHED PATTERNS,
AND MAY TEST TO UTMOST EVEN EXPERIENCED CHAMELEON LIKE BOB HAWKE,
WHO FACES WEEK-LONG ACTU EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING STARTING
AUGUST 26.
BROWN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR UNIONS, TRADE COMPLAINTS, POLITICAL LEADERS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, LABOR OBJECTIVES, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MELBOU00984
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740227-0577
From: MELBOURNE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740837/aaaabfjp.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUL 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS IN PUBLIC RUPTURE
TAGS: ELAB, AS, (EGERTON, JACK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005